

April 14, 2016

RE: Testimony of Kym Juntti, Director of Training and the Center for Positive Living Supports for Macomb Oakland Regional Center, Inc. - House Bills 5409-5418 and Senate Bills 835-838

Dear House Education Standing Committee Members:

My name is Kym Juntti from Macomb Oakland Regional Center, Inc. and I serve as the Director of Training and the Center for Positive Living Supports.

I started as a caregiver in the human services field 33 years ago. The practice of seclusion and restraint in supporting individuals with disabilities was commonplace. In 1983, I received four days of training on how to restrain someone safely (there is no such thing). On a daily basis I physically restrained those in my care who were trying to communicate, through behavior, that they were frightened, scared, agitated, anxious, overwhelmed. While we were trained to use these strategies to keep ourselves and those we cared for safe, they were used for other things as well. They were used to teach that we were in control, that we had the power, that they had to follow our rules, as a response to our own frustration, and unfortunately just because some caregivers were bored.

Good people can do bad things with the wrong tools! We must provide better tools!

MORC, Inc. is an organization providing services to highly complex individuals in the public mental health system, we have been diligently working for the past 30 years on reducing the use of punishment, restraint and forms of seclusion for those we serve. We have seen great success through the use of an approach we call "gentle teaching" or the creation of cultures of gentleness in residential and vocational settings. We know that such an approach is highly successful in school settings as evidenced by some of our colleagues in other states and Canada. At one point, we were partnering with Clawson Schools, outside of Detroit, for a grant opportunity to share our training model with school personnel. Clawson Schools has made an active commitment to reducing restraint and seclusion and were seeing results but wanted to make it deeper.

We are the largest agency in the world to implement this approach throughout its service system, starting in the 1980's and refining it ever since. The Center for Positive Living Supports, a part of MORC Training, provides training on a Culture of Gentleness and Positive Behavior Supports within its service delivery system, across the state, nationally and internationally. MORC is considered a center of excellence in providing training, consultation and mentoring to all levels of an organization. Because of our reputation we were asked to assist in the closure of Mt. Pleasant Center in 2009. We conducted training, mentoring and consulting activities across the state to assure that the remaining individuals could be successfully transitioned back to

their home communities. Our model includes a commitment of support for individuals and the training of caregivers which focuses on creating positive interpersonal relationships between the parties, rather than emphasizing control. Our experience with typical school programs is that control and conformance is a focus for students. We vigorously attempt to avoid using restrictive or physical interventions and traditional behavioral methods (e.g., take downs, time-out, psychotropic medications). Instead, our model emphasizes the development of safe, nurturing relationships which encourage the individual to grow, explore and mature. Evidence that this model succeeds includes the fact that MORC has not routinely taught physical intervention techniques to caregivers for over 20 years. During this time, we have seen Unusual Incident Reports decrease, hospitalizations reduced, fewer contacts with the police, injuries to staff and individuals reduced and less caregiver turnover.

To this day, typical support strategies in schools and many mental health programs focus on what needs to be changed with the individual served, what their deficits are and how to reduce or ameliorate them. One of the major differences between our message and more traditional approaches is how we, as caregivers or teachers, need to change our interaction and support strategies not focus on how the individual needs to change.

While moving away from restrictive and punitive strategies, we heard the same comments you are hearing now from those fearful of this change. People will get hurt! How can we protect ourselves and others? We have a responsibility to teach them an appropriate way of interacting in society. Its therapeutic. It was not true 30 years ago and it is not true now.

Please key consider these key points:

- Policy and regulations changes are not enough, we must focus on systemic cultural change
- Individuals thrive when they feel physically and emotionally safe and respected (teachers and students)
- We are not open to learn from those we do not feel safe and valued by (teachers and students)
- Restraint and punishment leads to profound trauma that can last a life time (teachers and students)
- All levels of organizations must be involved in this cultural shift
- We all have a moral and ethical responsibility to protect our most vulnerable citizens

In summary, we urge you to support this legislation for more humane approaches with our most vulnerable student and to inform you that there are successful alternatives in operation within Michigan.

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